

BOOK REVIEWS

THE PARANORMAL by Brian Inglis. Granada, London, 1985. 344 pp. £12.95.

Dr. Inglis has subtitled his book 'an encyclopedia of psychic phenomena', though this volume is not an encyclopedia in the traditional sense. It explores several aspects of parapsychology and the parasciences by way of lengthy sections devoted to their history, ESP, ghosts, divination, magic, psychic states of mind, and a few border areas of study. Each of these sections is broken down into sub-headings that cover more specific topics. For example, his section on clairvoyance includes comments on second sight, travelling clairvoyance, finger-tip vision, clairaudience, and so on. His section on psychokinesis similarly includes sections on static-object PK, metal bending, apports, 'direct' writing, and psychic photography. The book concludes with a forty page section composed of brief biographies of notable researchers and psychics.

This is certainly an ambitious project, and the book seems ideally suited for the novice reader. The tone of the book is non-technical and not overly sophisticated, which should appeal to a wide general reader. But in the long run, Dr. Inglis' book is only partially successful. It contains several strong sections, but is marred by just as many fatal weaknesses.

Dr. Inglis has shown in his previous books that he is a more than capable historian of the field. Probably the chief virtue of *The Paranormal* is the hearty reliance it places on the historical literature of the field. The case material Dr. Inglis uses while presenting his topics is also sometimes unusual and unexpected. Side by side with information he has culled from the field's traditional literature, he often relies on stories and anecdotes drawn from less familiar sources, especially autobiographies. Fascinating accounts of psychic encounters are recounted from such works as Rudyard Kipling's autobiography, the late Tito Gobbi (the famous operatic baritone) has some interesting things to say about his own psychic experiences, and other delectable sources are drawn upon as well. The use of this material keeps this book fresh, and will hold the interest of even a veteran student of the field.

Since he is so strong in the field of history, Dr. Inglis devotes considerable attention to the subject of physical psi phenomena. This is another of the book's strong points. Parapsychologists today are beginning to realize that the literature concerning the great physical mediums of the past should once again be studied seriously. This rise of interest in the careers of D. D. Home, Eusapia Palladino, Kathleen Goligher and others has probably been an outgrowth from parapsychology's increasing consideration of PK in general. It is therefore a pleasure to see a great deal of this information presented in *The Paranormal*, and to see such subjects as ectoplasm, materialization, levitation and 'elongation' seriously treated and soberly discussed.

But as I implied earlier, even these virtues cannot overcome the book's many flaws. Probably the first and most limiting is that large sections of it are sorely out of date. While the reader ends up respecting the author's command of parapsychology's history, sometimes Dr. Inglis writes as though modern experimental parapsychology hardly even exists. Topics currently critical to the status of the field either go unacknowledged or are only briefly cited. His section on experimental PK, for example, makes only a passing reference to the research

of Dr. Helmut Schmidt, and gives the reader no idea how important micro-PK research is to contemporary parapsychology. Nor is any mention made of the increasingly fascinating retro-PK effect, surely one of the field's most provocative recent findings. Later on in the book Dr. Inglis discusses the role of relaxation in enhancing ESP performance, but none of the formal experimental research on progressive muscular relaxation is cited. Ganzfeld research is given a passing reference, but even here Dr. Inglis misrepresents the Ganzfeld setting as primarily a relaxation technique. He misses the critical point that the Ganzfeld is used to help the subject generate mental imagery, based on the assumption that such imagery can serve as a carrier for ESP information. Similar deficiencies mar his sections on the poltergeist and experimental research on psychic healing.

What type of coverage an encyclopedist decides to give his topics relies, of course, on personal judgment. But a second problem with *The Paranormal* is more serious, for Dr. Inglis seems to have a curious penchant for white-washing the careers of psychics and researchers whom he favors. This type of 'revisionist' history especially mars his sections on the great physical mediums of yesteryear. For example, twice he reminds his readers that Mrs. Mina Crandon was never caught directly in fraud, although her career hopelessly divided the A.S.P.R. in the 1920s and 1930s. This is not really true, and it seems rather uncircumspect for Dr. Inglis to ignore the fact that she once tried to persuade her chief supporter (J. Malcolm Bird) to act as her accomplice! Dr. Inglis also champions the case of Eva C., the French sensitive known for her production of ectoplasm. The career of Eva C. was a complex and baffling one, but Dr. Inglis has little right to simply ignore the published testimony concerning a purported confession that her earlier career (in Algiers) was based on fraud. Even though this information came to the S.P.R. under rather odd circumstances, it cannot be overlooked.

This type of selective reporting even extends to some current cases. For instance, on page 114 the reader finds three paragraphs devoted to the SORRAT group in Missouri. Dr. Inglis discusses the fact that the telekinesis photographed there is controversial. But he makes no mention of the fact that researchers from the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man collected direct evidence of fraud while carrying out a pilot experiment with SORRAT. Even worse is the treatment given to the work of Gerard Croiset, whose career as a Dutch sensitive was so enthusiastically promoted by his chief researcher and mentor, Professor Wilhelm Tenhaeff of the University of Utrecht. Dr. Inglis is clearly impressed by the published reports on Croiset, and he even writes that his career has been '... only marginally dented by some carping criticism by skeptics of some of the research undertaken by his mentor . . .'. This statement indicates to me that either Dr. Inglis has never really read these criticisms, or is willing to off-handedly dismiss blatantly damning information.

The criticism to which Dr. Inglis is alluding is most certainly that of the late Piet Hein Hoebens, who was one of the field's most sensible critics. Sometime before his death, Hoebens decided to critically reinvestigate several cases presented by Dr. Tenhaeff dealing with Croiset's work as a psychic detective. His findings showed without doubt that Dr. Tenhaeff systematically exaggerated and lied about them. (Hoebens' reports appeared in the Fall and Winter 1981 and 1981-82 issues of the *Skeptical Enquirer*). For Dr. Inglis to call this laborious and detailed research 'carping criticism' is frankly inexcusable.

In the final run, though, the worth of an encyclopedia must rest with its accuracy. Encyclopedias are supposed to be designed as complete and reliable guides to a large and complex field of study, and those who write them must be painstakingly sure of their facts. It is here, too, that *The Paranormal* falters; for it contains simply too many errors of fact to be considered a reliable text on the paranormal. These errors are numerous, in fact, and not all of them can be noted in a short review of this nature. The following is a representative list, however:

(1) It is not true that shamans are chosen by the fact that they can display psychic powers (p. 1). There are several ways by which shamans are chosen in primitive societies, most often through a 'calling', hereditary factors, or by petition.

(2) Dr. John Palmer has never been an associate professor of psychology at the University of California (p. 29). He worked there for two years as a research associate.

(3) It is not true (p. 43) that a skeptical colleague of the S.R.I.'s remote viewing research with Ingo Swann first suggested experiments using geographical coordinates. This idea was first suggested by Swann himself, and sometime later a skeptical observer was asked to contribute the coordinates for a series of experimental trials.

(4) Dr. Inglis also mistakenly believes that research into the out-of-body capabilities of Keith Harary was conducted at the American Society for Psychical Research in New York by Dr. Karlis Osis (p. 47). It was actually carried out by Dr. Robert Morris and his collaborators at the Psychical Research Foundation in Durham, North Carolina.

If these errors weren't enough, even his historical data are sometimes questionable. For example:

(1) He cites incorrect dates for some French research with Eusapia Palladino (p. 107), though they are correctly given later in the book (p. 311).

(2) William Crookes did not give up his psychic research because of the criticisms he was facing (p. 140). He ended this phase of his scientific career when he felt that he had accomplished what he set out to do. It is true that he was alarmed by the fury of the criticisms leveled against him, but mostly abandoned his research when it became clear to him that he could never persuade the scientific establishment to embrace psychical research.

(3) The term *psychometry* was not coined by a mesmerist shortly before the turn of the century (p. 215), but in 1842 by Dr. J. Rhodes Buchanan, a physician researching the subject in Kentucky and Ohio.

(4) It is not true that Sigmund Freud was dissuaded from publishing his views on telepathy during his lifetime (p. 256). He did defer for a while, but most of his papers on the subject were published long before his death—i.e., in 1904, 1925 and 1933.

(5) Hereward Carrington never tried to persuade the famous *Scientific American* committee to consider the case of Eusapia Palladino (p. 286). His support was for Mina Crandon, whom he believed should get the committee's award for proving the existence of psychic phenomena.

There are also indications of sloppy writing and/or reporting throughout the

book. One of these passages (p. 110) concerns the career of Rudi Schneider, certainly one of the most interesting of the past's great physical mediums. Dr. Inglis details the fine research Dr. Eugene Osty conducted with Schneider in Paris, which was later replicated by Lord Charles Hope and Lord Rayleigh in London. He then briefly notes that Harry Price's much heralded and dubious 'exposure' of Schneider resulted because he was 'furious over what he regarded as Hope's treachery in appropriating Rudi . . .'. This is all true enough, but nowhere earlier in this brief section does Dr. Inglis ever mention that Schneider had previously worked exclusively in England with Price. This passage will therefore make very little sense to the reader unfamiliar with this curious chapter in parapsychology's history. Similar sloppiness can be found in a section devoted to the career of Uri Geller, where Dr. Inglis notes (p. 126) that Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff captured an apport (a wrist watch) on film at S.R.I. International. According to whom? Certainly not these researchers, who have personally assured me that the trajectory of the object is totally consistent with Geller's having merely tossed it in the air! Dr. Inglis seems to be consistently 'soft' on Geller, since he gives prominent attention (p. 112) to his ability to permanently bend nitinol wire. Predictably enough, no reference is made to the devastating critique of this research that Martin Gardner published in the May/June 1977 issue of the *Humanist*, and which was recently published in his *Science: Good, Bad, and Bogus*.

Every book of the size and scope of *The Paranormal* is bound to contain a few faults, omissions, and errors. But this new book by Dr. Inglis simply contains too many for comfort.

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MIRACLES: A PARASCIENTIFIC INQUIRY INTO WONDROUS PHENOMENA by D. Scott Rogo. Dial Press, New York, 1982. 332 pp. Illustrated. \$17.95.

In the past, several persons have presented studies of paranormal phenomena in the lives of saints and mystics and in other religious contexts. The publications of Görres, Leroy, Ribet, and Thurston are good examples. The book reviewed here, although of a more popular style than the work of the previously mentioned authors, is one of the most recent surveys of this type of paranormal phenomena. The author states its purpose in the preface: '... to document the existence of the miraculous by exploring several representative genres and examples of these awesome events . . . , to present the scientific rather than the religious case for the miraculous (p. ix). Throughout the book, phenomena reported in religious contexts are compared to those reported in secular traditions.

The book's thirteen chapters cover a variety of phenomena under three general headings: (1) miraculous talents (i.e., levitation, stigmata, and bilocation), (2) miraculous events (e.g., religious images appearing on diverse surfaces, bleeding and weeping statues), and (3) miraculous intervention (i.e., Marian apparitions and healing).

John Beloff replies:

I welcome Dennis Stillings' contribution to the debate and I congratulate him on finding that marvellous passage from Goethe. But is this the question at issue? Jule Eisenbud, as I understood him, was not concerned with the efficacy of ritual curses such as were used in traditional witchcraft but with the ubiquitous operations of the Unconscious. The point of my Hitler example was to argue that if someone who generated so much hatred in his lifetime could, nevertheless, thrive as he did, then lesser mortals have little to fear from the supposed menace of lethal PK. I could equally well have cited Stalin who, unlike Hitler, died in his bed at an advanced age after having acquired, with an unprecedented ruthlessness, a personal power greater than that of any figure in history.

The Paranormal

To the Editor,

'Every book the size and scope of *The Paranormal* is bound to contain a few faults, omissions and errors', D. Scott Rogo admits, listing them in his review of my book (JSPR, 53, no. 801, p. 180-3). 'But this new book by Dr. Inglis simply contains too many for comfort'. I am amused to find that the number of faults, omissions and errors which are listed in the adjacent *Journal* review of Rogo's book, *Miracles*, is rather larger—though the reviewer, Carlos Alvarado, charitably does not make a similar comment.

Of my errors, I find, five fall into the category ordinarily referred to as *errata*. I am grateful to Rogo for noting them. They will be corrected, I trust, in the paperback edition. But the others?

1. 'It is not true', Rogo asserts, 'that shamans are chosen by the fact that they can display psychic powers'. It is no longer true, but it used to be, at the time I was writing about, often enough at least to justify my qualification 'ordinarily'.
2. 'It is not true', Rogo continues, 'that a skeptical colleague of the S.R.I.'s remote viewing research with Ingo Swann first suggested experiments using geographical co-ordinates'. Again, if he reads what I wrote (p. 43), he will see that this was not what I said. That the skeptical colleague challenged Puthoff, Targ and Swann to do a test, not the first, is clear from *Mind-Reach* (1977, p. 2).
3. Crookes did not give up psychical research because of the criticisms he was facing, Rogo claims; 'he ended this phase of his scientific career when he felt he had accomplished what he had to do'. Crookes in fact explained he had ended it because he was 'so busy with scientific matters'. That he did not return to it was surely not because he had done all he wanted to do, but because of his understandable disgust with the treatment he had received as a result of the internecine warfare in spiritualist circles at the time.

'It is not true', Rogo continues, 'that Sigmund Freud was dissuaded from publishing his views on telepathy during his lifetime'. Correct; but if Rogo reads the passage in my book (p. 256) he will—yet again—see that this was not what I claimed. Freud allowed himself, I wrote, 'to be persuaded by Ernest Jones not to

publish his views on it for fear that it would make orthodoxy still more hostile'. I was referring to the paper which Jones and Eitington dissuaded him from publishing (Jones, *Sigmund Freud*, Vol. III, p. 420), in order to illustrate the fact, which Rogo unwittingly confirms, that Freud was ambivalent about ESP.

Apart from the errata, in fact, the only actual errors which Rogo presents are his own. The 'omissions' and 'faults' fall into two categories. That I decided to omit much of what has been happening recently in parapsychology was a deliberate decision; to have dealt with it in adequate detail would have exceeded the space limits, and I have to admit to believing that the reading public, to whom the book is directed, is more likely to be interested in the historical and anecdotal evidence than in the Ganzfeld and micro-PK.

The remaining 'faults' which Rogo worries about all fall into a category related to Michael Thalbourne's interesting 'Type I Error/Type II Error' notion, which he outlines in the same issue of the *Journal*. 'Type I' errors, Thalbourne suggests, do not worry overmuch about being caught out occasionally in the pursuit of psi. 'Type II' errors would 'rather miss out the real McCoy than approve a fake'.

Rather to my surprise, Rogo appears determined to impose Type II standards. For example, he complains that I had 'little right to ignore the published testimony concerning a purported confession that "Eva C"'s earlier career (in Algiers) was based on fraud'. 'Purported' is an understatement. A disgruntled local lawyer claimed that Marthe Béraud (Eva) had confessed to him that she produced her 'materialisations' with the help of an accomplice and a trapdoor. There was no trap door. Perhaps the lawyer was lying; perhaps Marthe was a tease. Whatever the explanation, I did not feel it necessary to relate the story.

Similarly with other 'exposures' of the kind we are all wearily familiar with. If I ignore Martin Gardner's 'devastating' account of the Nitinol episode in *The Geller Papers* it is less because the evidence for that, or any single case, in Geller's career can carry total conviction, than because other metal-benders have been performing similar feats since, in circumstances which preclude the kind of deception Geller was supposed to have practised—cf. the experiment described by Randall and Davis (JSPR, 51, no. 792). What Gaither Pratt called 'recurrence', of this kind, is a sadly undervalued commodity in parapsychology.

So much for the 'faults, omissions and errors'. Rogo claims that space was too limited to list others. I will be glad to pay £1 (or \$1, whichever is the higher) into a named charity (the Koestler Foundation) for every one he sends me, provided that it is *not* a matter of opinion, but of fact.

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NOTICE

Call for Papers for the 29th Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association

The 29th annual convention of the Parapsychological Association will be held Tuesday, August 5 to Saturday, August 9, 1986 at Sonoma State University in